CHAPTER L.

Nettleby Grange was a pleasant-looking, gray, old-fashioned residence, full of the river, should not have come to es and ivied casements. It stood in live so near it." a hollow nearly at the bottom of the vale, and it used to nestle there retired that they were shirking their share of the responsibilities arising on these perhad been changed in that respect. About a year and a half ago a great, smooth, red brick mansion had built itself on a hill not half a mile away, glittering at all hours of the day with modern plate glass windows and flashing its gilt vanes. At sunset it often positively blazed, putting all other buildings far and near out of counterance. The Grange was an effective that they were shirking their share of the responsibilities arising on these periodically recurring occasions. Had they been present, they would have had to put forth all their vigor not to have been eclipsed by the maiden lady herself. Perhaps it would not be quite fair to say that she made the most of the opportunity.

There was need for somebody to bestir of countenance. The Grange was an-moyed, it became enraged—at least, Miss Beamish, its mistreess, did. For all such

Beamish, its mistreess, did. For all such purposes, she was the Grange.

Perhaps Prospect House was a little provoking. For one thing, it was married, and the Grange was not, and was not likely to be. Miss Beamish was not solitary; she had a family in a certain way. There lived with her a widowed nister, Mrs. Sibbert, whose husband had not died till he got through her fortune in ill-speculations, but who left her, in ts place, two children. The generous, high-minded old maid had opened the doors of the Grange to all three. This occurred nearly two years ago. For a brief six months Miss Beamish enjoyed a kind of domestic glory. Every old-maidish air was laid aside. She brightfamily; as if she, and not her poor worn sister, had brought about domesticity. At church she marshaled Kate and Wilhe down the aisle before her, their real mother coming weakly in the rear of all. It is true there was something slightly ridiculous in this doing. With Willie, a boy of about fourteen, she might have carried it off; but Miss Kate was taller than her aunt by a head, and her elegant beauty attracted all eyes, the ancient little; but they ran on and on, turning mistress of the Grange really being only now one way, now the other, and stril half seen.

But Miss Beamish's triumph in these ways, even such as it was, only lasted for he brief time we have named. Prospect House was finished, and Mr. and Mrs. Dixon, with a real complete, properly presided-over family, took possession of it. Besides Mr. Dixon, tall, genial, intelligent, and Mrs. Dixon, portly and inclined to patronize, there were three daughters, one of them only a little less handsome that Kate Sibbert; and, finally, one son, a good-looking young fellow, his father over again, with the advantages of being slimmer, active and fresh. Confronted with their carriage and its pair of high-stepping horses, the pony carriage from the Grange looked shabby, or, if it did not, it was because Kate was in it. At church the Dixons made a larger, more imposing procession; the pew they filled was nearer the pulpit, for they had bought that belonging to the old ruined Manor House. Indeed, Prospect House seemed to have money for anything. Mr. Dixon was a large manufacturer in the country town, some ten miles away, but was beginning slowly to retire from business. Some friendly advances on the part of the Dixons were made to Miss Beamish, and, But a church bazar had taken place in the fittle village hehind the hill.

Mrs. Dixon, unfortunately, contributed an ottoman cover, which was preferred by most beholders to one Miss Beamish the contributed to the most beholders to one Miss Beamish there was some color in Miss Reamish. at first, she yielded to them with civilty. had sent. After this, was it not inevitable that matters should end between them?

"No doubt," said Miss Beamish, "the Dixons had bought the gaudy thing in London, while every stitch in hers was her of doing. But people had no powers of distinguishing."

There were whispers among the more knowing ones in the village, that Miss Beamish was not such a simpleton, ather years, to take offence from this cause. Young Mr. Dixon had begun to manifest an awareness of the presence in the place of Kate Sibbert. He was very often to be seen in the vicinity of the Grange. Miss Beamish having had a family for only so short a time was not willing that it should be broken up by this young man all in a moment. The gossips said she had taken advantage of the bazar to set up her back at the Dixon family. However the truth lay, it had some-

how come about that an unhappy coolness there was. Unhappy it must assuredly be called. A more eligible match for Kate could not be hoped. Mrs. Sibbert's nervous, subdued looks showed that she felt this; while Kate's Cures Cuturrh, Bronchitts, Asthms pale face and downcast eyes at church seemed to intimate that she had no part in the feud, excepting to suffer from it. But Miss Beamish was the head of the family at the Grange, and she meant to

marry her belongings in her own way. In this condition matters stood when, m autumn, an event of great importance to all the neighborhood happened.

The valley in which Nettleby lay formed part of the southern water-shed

of that district of the Midlands, If long-continued rains fell on the borders of two of the adjoining northern shires, the vale was liable to inundation at amazingly short notice from the overflowing of the river. It seemed rather an unfair geographical arrangement. Nettle-by, without having had a drop of rain of its own, might find itself exposed to a deluge from showers falling on the moorlands forty miles away. A number of seasons often passed without floods being serious, then at these intervals came an inroad of waters which might

even risk life as well as destroy property.

Fears were beginning to be felt of a calamity of this kind now. There had been unusually protracted rains; on this occasion, Nettleby had itself shared in what made things critical was that the weather had been still worse on the higher lands to the north. The river steadily kept on rising; already it was hiding its banks under a rolling, ever-broadenty, turbid torrent.

The Dixons early in autumn—that is,

'ag, turbid torrent. The Dixons early in autumn—that is, meerly two months ago had all gone on their usual holiday trip. It was

KATE SIBBERT'S AUNT, known in the village that they were upon the Continent when the river kept rising. Miss Beamish rather ma-liciously hinted that it was on this score

She seemed wishful to make it out that they were shirking their share of the responsibilities arising on these per-iodically recurring occasions. Had they

There was need for somebody to bestir themselves; the river was setting the example. Day and night, hour by hour, minute by minute, it rose higher. On the Wednesday evening tales of calamity began to come in on all sides.

#### CHAPTER IL.

On the Thursday morning the floods were out in Nettleby Vale as they had not been for many years. The river was no longer to be traced; in its place there was a lake. In all the lower parts of the valley the water had spread until the very look of the district was changed. Familiar landmarks had vanished, nearly every hedgerow was blotted out; the trees had a preposterous dumpiness, beened up, dressed more gaily, but in a very matronly sort of way, and talked in a busy, rattling manner. She became twice as active as before, quite fluttering the village with her suddenly acquired the village with her suddenly acquired these. For the rest, a level, dull, whitishing cut off at the knees. Even the farms gray expanse gleamed everywhere. The air was astir with a multitudinous watery murmur, and any other sound made a heavy yet far-reaching noise, like voices when snow is on the ground.

But it is not with the landscape generally we have just now to do. Ketten-ham turnpike still stood where it did; its bordering hedgerows, with occasional trees, looked very black and also very now one way, now the other, and stril showing abo the water. Along this road, abou. aaff-past three in the afternoon, a luxuriant little pony carriage containing two ladies, drawn by a couple of long-tailed Lilliputian animals, made rapid progress. The occupants of the carriage were Miss Beamish and Kate. It had rather a strange look to see them there, and said something for their courage, for, at a little distance, it seemed rather that the carriage should have been a boat. But they were safe. The road was still high and dry, and, indeed, at intervals, on the left hand side, green flowing fields yet showed. When passing along the same road two hours before, the ladies and their vehicle looked queerer. At their feet arose a pile of loaves, between them were propped two large cheeses, cut into portions; here and there, just where they could be put, stuck out white packages of groceries.

Miss Beamish had taken some greatly

needed provisions to a ferry, which still communicated with a cluster of cottages, whose approach to the town Kettenbam, from whence they usually derived their support, was cut off. She and Kate were not the only ones engaged in the good work. The Rector of Nettleby, though an old man now, had gone off in another bright, as she sat stiffly on the cushion.
"I hear as how the water has burst

the bank at Ratcliffe, an', if it be so, we shall ha' it higher yet." The speaker was an elderly, smock-frocked laborer, who came out at a gate

eading into an upland field, where a little crown of wild staring cattle had been gathered together. He had a pitchfork on his shoulder, and bits of hay upon his clothing showed that he had been feeding the poor beasts. Miss Beamish pulled up her ponies at the sight of him. He went on:

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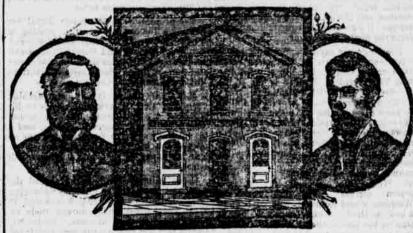
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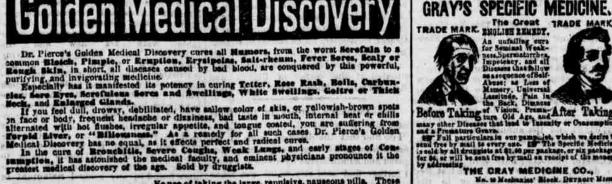
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